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## Social Problems and Reforms

*The Social Problem: A Constructive Analysis.* By CHARLES A. ELLWOOD. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1915. Pp. xii, 255. \$1.25.)

Looking upon Western civilization as a whole, as it manifests itself in the second decade of the twentieth century, Professor Ellwood finds many causes of dissatisfaction and apprehension. In its very foundations there exists a disquieting degree of rottenness, attributable to the "egoistic, socially-negative doctrines" which marked the nineteenth century. There is danger that civilization itself, at best a fragile creation, will be disrupted, and mankind will be plunged once more into barbarism. This situation, however, does not call for a pessimistic attitude. It is a mistake to assume that the course of social evolution is predetermined, and that man has no control of his own destiny. It is the function of social science to show how social forces may be manipulated by human agencies so as to bring about a more desirable state of things than could result from the operation of blind chance. This is the social problem, the "problem of human living together," and it is the greatest of all the problems which confront mankind, because it includes all of the so-called "social problems," each of which is integrally related to it, and can not be adequately dealt with as an isolated phenomenon.

Civilization being at bottom a matter of ideal values, it is most important that the ideas and ideals which characterize any society should be both right and harmonious. Much of the present disorder is due to a lack of uniformity as to social values, and to a tenacious adherence to certain socially-negative values, such as materialism, individualism, and hyper-nationalism, which have gained a firm hold on the Western mind. If society is to progress, and progress by a better means than revolution, its members must come to an agreement as to the value of ideas and ideals. Those which are socially advantageous must be selected for approval and perpetuation; those which are destructive must be marked out for condemnation and elimination. To do this successfully requires an analysis of the various elements of our present civilization.

Among the historical elements, the greatest religious contribution is found to have come from the Hebrews. To the Greeks we owe our artistic and intellectual traditions, and to the Romans our traditions in government and law. The Germans have given

us our tradition of individual liberty. Being thus a composite, or mosaic, put together from several different sources, the contributions of which could not be perfectly blended, our civilization is of necessity full of inconsistencies. The social confusion which results from these tendencies is especially marked in America. The physical elements involved in the social problem have called forth the new science of eugenics, which offers great promise. Among the economic elements are to be distinguished city life and capitalism, each of which has its dangerous tendencies, particularly the latter through its encouragement of materialism in rich and poor alike. Capitalism, as it now exists, is to be thoroughly condemned. Some form of socialism, in the broad sense, must take its place. Among the spiritual and ideal elements there is so much of confusion, and so many socially-negative doctrines, that a revaluation in nearly every department of life is called for, if civilization is to persist and society progress.

Of the social problem thus presented, Professor Ellwood finds no permanent solution possible. Principles must be discovered which will serve as a constant guide to conduct. The solution can not be by one-sided devices, by external machinery of social organization, nor by revolution. The salutary changes must arise within the human character. The method of securing them is through the education of the young into a proper understanding of, and attitude toward, their social environment. To do this, trained social leaders are necessary, and the development of such leaders is the great need of the day.

The foregoing summary should give an idea of the value of the book, and of its contribution to social science. It remains only to remark that it is well written, interesting, and convincing. The breadth of vision and common-sense attitude which mark all of Professor Ellwood's writing save it from the impracticability and abstruseness which the subject might easily have involved.

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*The Normal Life.* By EDWARD T. DEVINE. (New York: Survey Associates, Inc. 1915. Pp. 233. \$1.00.)

This book is admirably conceived, the author having chosen to disregard the conventional policy of social workers and, instead of discussing existing evils, to present the "positive rather than the negative aspect of life, normal development rather than patho-